

## **President Creates Great Lakes Interagency Task Force**

President George W. Bush has signed an Executive Order creating the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, to be led by EPA.

The Task Force brings together the 10 Agency and Cabinet officers whose agencies administer more than 140 different federal programs that help fund and implement environmental restoration and management activities in the Great Lakes basin.

The President also instructed EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt to engage the Council of Great Lakes Governors and the Great Lakes Cities Initiative to convene a complementary process of regional collaboration.

"Collaboration and coordination - building on the broad collection of existing efforts while ensuring leadership and accountability at the national and international level - is clearly a better way," Administrator Leavitt said. "It is only through the transparent consideration of the rich diversity of perspectives surrounding this international treasure that we can truly accelerate remediation, restoration, protection and conservation."

The Great Lakes - Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario - form the largest surface freshwater system on the Earth. More than 30 million people live in the Great Lakes basin, and the daily activities of these people, from the water consumed to the waste returned, directly affects the Great Lakes environment. Major stresses on the lakes also include toxic and nutrient pollution, invasive species and habitat degradation.

The United States and Canada both have jurisdiction over the Great Lakes Basin. Within the US, the EPA and nine other agencies together administer more than 140 different federal programs helping fund and implement environmental restoration and management activities in the Great Lakes basin. In addition, governance of the Great Lakes system is shared with eight U.S. states, nearly 40 Tribal Nations, more than half a dozen major metropolitan areas, and numerous county and local governments.

Activities will include removing contaminated sediment, expanding restoration projects, addressing invasive species, improving agricultural conservation, enhancing water quality, improving air quality, focusing research, and promoting international activities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be engaged in many of these activities.

Members of the task force include Administrator (Chair), Environmental Protection Agency, the Secretaries of State, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce,

Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and Army and the Chairman,  
Council on Environmental Quality.